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V. Dobroruka, *Second Temple Pseudepigraphy. A Cross-cultural Comparison of Apocalyptic Texts and Related Jewish Literature*, de Gruyter 2013.

The present book is a part of the de Gruyter series “Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages”, which addresses diverse topics such as “ecstatic trances, magic, healing, prophecy, divination, and dreams, as well as other phenomena that contribute to the scholarly exploration of religious experience”.¹ The series contains several volumes so far with A.K. Harkins, *Reading with an "I" to the Heavens. Looking at the Qumran Hodayot through the Lens of Visionary Traditions* (2012) and J. Frey, J.R. Levison (eds.), *The Holy Spirit, Inspiration, and the Cultures of Antiquity* (2014) being the newest contributions. The author of the present book, Vicente Dobroruka, is a graduate of several faculties, including Social History of Culture at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro and Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford, where he defended his doctoral dissertation: *Aspects of Late Second Temple Jewish Apocalyptic: a Cross-Cultural Comparison* on the Faculty of Theology in December 2005. He is currently working as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Brazil where he conducts the courses and leads the projects revolving around historiography, apocalyptic literature and religious syncretism of the Hellenistic-Roman world. Dobroruka is also associated with numerous academic institutions and organizations in Europe (e.g. Clare Hall, Societas Iranologica Europaea) and United States (e.g. University of Michigan).² Both the outline of his professional education and the present research confirmed by the papers and books clearly show the recurrent topics which appear in his newest publication.

The subject of the Second Temple literature is a complex one and poses numerous questions, which cannot be answered by the discipline itself. The author has decided for a fresh and brave approach and resorted to the cross-cultural studies. In result Dobroruka convincingly presents his intuitions at the same time maintaining a cautious stance. As he puts it by quoting other scholar “a comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge (...) Comparison provides the means by which we ‘re-vision’ phenomena as our data in order to solve our theoretical problem. Comparison does not necessarily tell us how

¹ [Online], <http://www.degruyter.com/view/serial/37830>, [27.V 2014].

² [Online], <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3307737713557231>, [28. V 2014].

things are but how things might be conceived”.³ Following this direction Dobroruka finds the counterpart of the Second Temple literature in the writings of the Brazilian spiritists,⁴ mainly – Chico Xavier. The author bases on several similarities between the ancient pseudepigrapha and modern Kardecist psychographic writings. In both cases the name of some famous and authoritative figure is used, the style of the selected genre is mimicked and the contents show the belief in the presence of a companion responsible for guiding the one who writes the text. The main difference is that whereas the Kardecist texts have their “earthly” writers, most of the pseudepigrapha do not provide this information. The author also points at the similar effects reported by the visionaries comprising the feelings of tiredness, trembling and hallucinations. Analogous are also the preparatory processes preceding the actual visions and as the author aptly remarks “what changes is culture and not chemistry or physiology”.⁵ In this particular case, the Second Temple pseudepigrapha constitute religious writings with an unknown human factor, whereas in the case of the Kardecist writings, not only the form is similar but the social background behind the phenomenon is also recognized. This in turn allows to extrapolate some of the conclusions on the ancient phenomenon.

The book is organized in six chapters. The first one (*Why a cross-cultural approach is needed in order to try a different understanding of Second Temple pseudepigraphy*) offers that pseudepigraphy could be understood as a kind of a possessive trance in which the writer feels as if he had been the person in whose name he is writing. The chapter lays off the basics of the comparative method applied by the author. Its precedence in scholarship (e.g. juxtaposing the Native American religions with biblical prophetism)⁶ is shown and, as the author sincerely admits, the method is very prone to abuse and as such should be applied with caution. Much space is devoted for the proper introduction of the terms and ideas borrowed from the sphere of psychology: altered state of consciousness, ecstasy, possession and the like, as these are necessary for the understanding of the rest of the book. The second chapter (*How much is automatic writing useful as a hermeneutic tool*) focuses on the phenomenon of the automatic writing and the essential traits distinguishing it from various other phenomena: (1) dissociative state of the subject and (2) the feeling of being controlled by some other agent resulting in (3) the production of an intelligible text without the participation of the conscious self. The richness of the output is in turn explained by means of the hypothetical

³ V. Dobroruka, *ibidem*, p. X.

⁴ Yet, the rationale behind the decision to resort to the term “Kardecism” throughout the book, rather than simply and more intuitively “spiritism” is not explicated enough.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁶ T. Overholt, *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Source-Book for Biblical Researchers*, Atlanta 1986.

cryptomnesia⁷ on the one hand and multiple personalities witnessing some internal conflicts on the other. Valuable is also the part in which Dobroruka summarizes the application of the automatic writing in the sphere of psychotherapy as a means of accessing the unconscious “hidden” in what the subject himself believes to be his previous life. The topic is continued in the third chapter (*Automatic writing in modern-day Kardecism*) which presents the automatic writing as the default tool of understanding the past events and in a way – a historiography of a kind. In sum, the author presents the phenomena of automatic writing in Kardecism as an insightful parallel for the understanding of the Second Temple pseudepigrapha. The fourth section (*Automatic writing in Antiquity regarding religious texts*) provides rich textual exemplification of the idea of possession by furnishing the passages from 1 Enoch 69:12, 3 Baruch 16:2 or Life of Adam and Eve 16:5; 17:4. Similar is also the fifth chapter (*Philo, Josephus and 4 Ezra: the main testimonies for inspired writing during the Second Temple Period*) which contains a lot of information on the literary motive of the heavenly visions. Chapter six (*Considerations on religious pseudepigraphy in Antiquity*) recollects the previous findings and presents the phenomenon in the broader context. Dobroruka devotes some space to list the names which had been particularly popular in the pseudepigraphical literature (e.g. Moses and Ezra are the lawgivers, Salomon is a sage, Enoch and Noah are antediluvian characters which enjoyed divine favors, etc.) and in result presents the apocalyptic literature as dependant on the sapiential and prophetic genres of the Bible.

The book is fluently and convincingly written while its construction is coherent and well thought over. Each chapter is concluded with a very useful summary which helps to recollect the new data whereas the book itself contains various helpful indices. Notwithstanding, there are several issues which need to be pointed out. First, the title does not precisely reflect the matter of the book. While this is always difficult to summarize the contents in one sentence and a compromise is unavoidable, a hint at some of the key-words (like “automatic writing”, “psychology” or “Kardecism”) essential for the tome would be more informative. On the other hand, the reader, unsuspecting of the broad range of subjects covered therein will be positively surprised, what by itself is always a value. Secondly, one issue which has not been addressed in a satisfactory manner is the question of the redaction and composition of particular ancient “anonymous” texts. It is safe to assume that these had initially existed in a more fragmentary form and must have gone a relatively long way before attaining its final, composite structure. In result and in most cases the authorship cannot be

⁷ In this regard it is a pity that the author did not refer in any way to the Freudian concept of *unheimlich* which would neatly fit the discourse.

ascribed to one person with all certainty analogically to the visionary parts of the biblical prophets bearing the marks of numerous redactional activities (e.g. Ezekiel 10). Still, this dilemma can be solved by transposing the conclusions of the book to the particular parts which could be defined as originating from one author. Thirdly, the main reservation about the book concerns its editorial aspect, as the text contains quite a number of lesser errors like broken text (“do not match memory images”, p. 54, footnote number 89), improper hyphenation (“neither can psychoanalytical concepts be”, p. 56; “does psychography comprise”, p. 79), repetitions (“Josephus, born Joseph ben Mattias, was born”, p. 121) or simple typos (“Na interesting parallel”, p. 140; “Origen is particular is arguing”, p. 159). Fortunately, a few of the mistakes result in reader’s amusement which is definitely the case with “Scared Scripture” (p. 22). In sum and despite of the above presented shortcomings, the book is certainly worth recommending as it genuinely applies the comparative methodology and thus enhances the comprehension of the phenomena of pseudepigraphy. In other words, what it lacks in the depth of the textual study it makes up for in the fresh and genuine perspective. As such it can be recommended to the scholars of the Bible and apocrypha as well as to the ones dealing with any type of the apocalyptic or prophetic literature.